MIDST THE SMOKE

TO LAUGH OR CRY.

by
W. FRED CONWAY
former Fire Chief

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DEDICATION

To those loyal men who organized and directed the Perry Township Volunteer Fire Department, fighting fires and public apathy at the same time, these pages are dedicated; as well as to my favorite hero, my dear wife, Betty, who for years was left a "fire house widow" and who, regardless of sickness, pregnancies, or come-what-may, never failed to telephone the volunteers who lived beyond earshot of the whistle.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine, if you will, a suburban and rural area during the 1950's surrounding a medium sized midwestern city, where fire protection was not only virtually non-existant, but where foundations and chimneys were simply an accepted way of life - and where the vast majority of the residents couldn't care less.

Imagine further, a young fire service enthusiast who suddenly found himself transplanted from one of the most highly developed suburban and rural fire department complexes in the nation (Prince Georges County, Maryland) to this suburban area west of Evansville, Indiana, devoid of fire protection.

With the help of a handful of faithful men who shared his vision and his faith, the Perry Township Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. grew from an idea, to a second hand fire engine parked at a gasoline service station, to the largest volunteer fire department in southern Indiana, which at this writing has answered more than one thousand fire alarms and has saved property valued at millions of dollars.

In these pages the author shares with you many of the heart-warming incidents and anecdotes that happened along the way.

1

"Ya Done Good"

"Fellas - this here's the way I feel about it," began Charles Grammelspacher, an elderly farmer whose Community Club committee had just listened to me present the case for organizing a volunteer fire department. As I cringed in my chair, Charlie went on..... "If everybody buys a fire distinguisher, we won't need a fire department or no fire truck. Let's pass a law that everybody in Perry Township has to buy a fire distinguisher. Then if there's a fire, everybody will come with their fire distinguishers and put it out, and we won't need no expensive fire truck."

How do you explain to a well-meaning man like Charlie that "fire distinguishers" cannot protect an entire township? I tried by explaining that a first aid kit belongs in every home but that we still need doctors and hospitals. Fortunately the other committee members saw the light and recommended that the Club assist in the formation of a volunteer fire department, even though Charlie still held fast to his "fire distinguisher" theory.

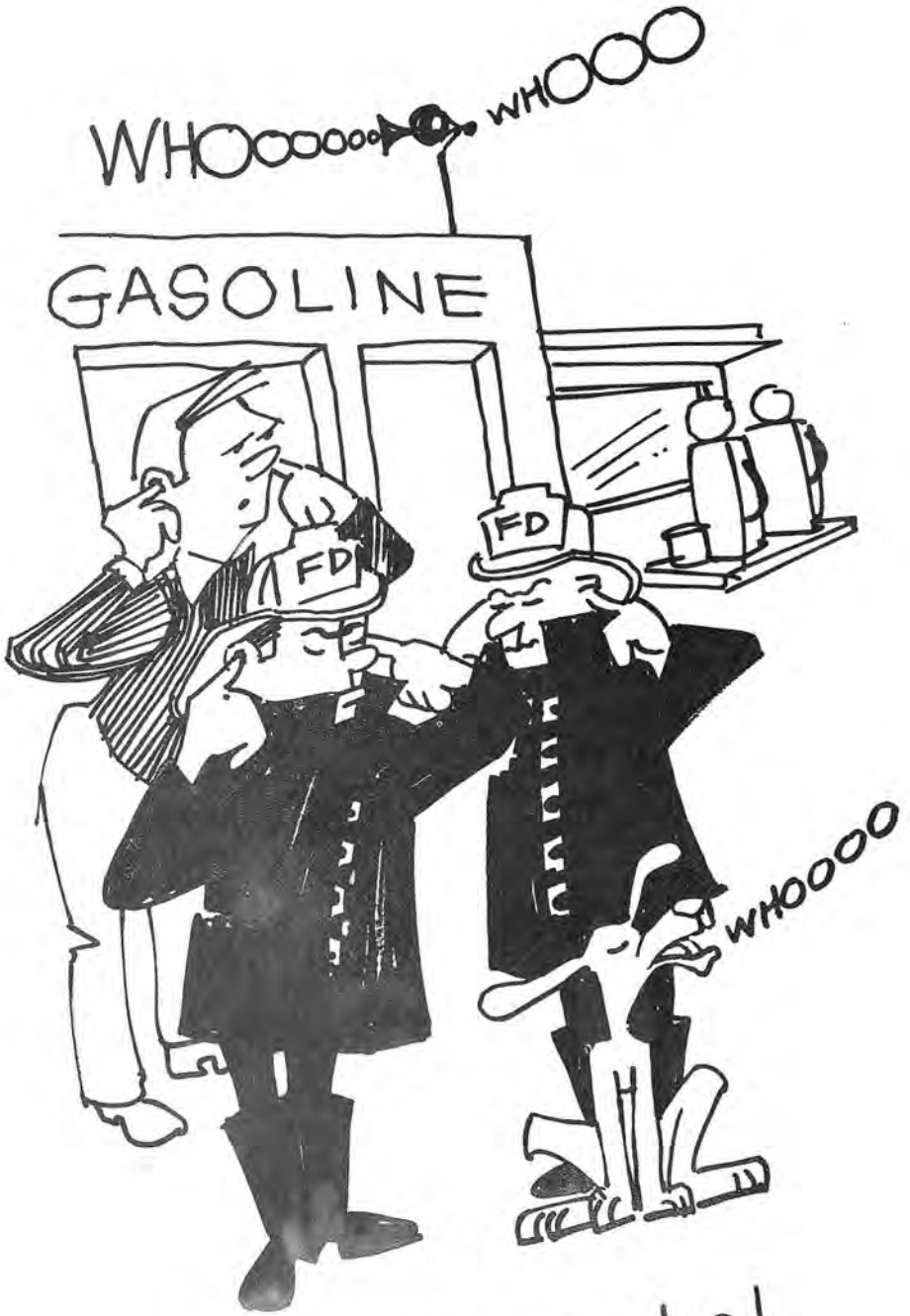
Let me move time ahead some two years to an evening when an alarm came in for a burning wheat field. Hundreds of acres of Charlie's wheat crop were burning around the perimeter, fanned by a high wind, and lighting up the entire southern sky with the ominous orange glow that every fireman knows only too well.

"Old Number One", the second hand high pressure fog truck you'll be hearing more about, made the run down to Charlie's farm in record time. Driving around the fire perimeter with two men on the back step, each with a charged high pressure fog line, we soon had the fire blacked out. Charlie was there, as excited as a man can get. He ran over to me, and literally jumped up and down with both

"Ya done good!"

feet off the ground while pumping my hand, and exclaiming over and over - "Ya done good!...ya done good!...ya done good!..."

At the next fire department meeting Charlie appeared, presented the department with a sizable check, and announced his intentions of joining the department. And join it he did, actively answering alarms and attending meetings until a few months before his death at the age of eighty-one.



It works!

2

The "Believe it or Not" First Alarm.

"You can park your fire truck over the grease rack when I close up at night", service station operator Freddie Smith told thirty pleading would-be firemen, who had raised a five hundred dollar down payment on a used fire truck by knocking on hundreds of doors.

There was not enough money for the usual powerful electric siren to alert the volunteers of an alarm, so a loud air horn was procured at a fraction of the cost. It takes a lot of air to blow a big air horn, but Freddie said, "You can put it up on my roof and hook it up to my air compressor." We did. To this day that air compressor blows the "fire whistle" for station No. 1, and the dogs howl for a mile around when it goes off.

The county sheriff's office agreed to receive fire alarms, and to dispatch the new department with their radio system. With only enough money in the treasury for two tone-activated radio receivers, the writer purchased the third receiver out of his own pocket, and a neighborhood radio technician, Lou Fahrlender, built a fourth set from miscellaneous parts in his shop.

After many long hours of labor in building this unit, Lou brought the receiver down to Freddie's gas station, plugged it in, hooked up a relay between the receiver and the electric selenoid valve on the compressed air pipe to the whistle, and phoned the sheriff's office for a test signal. Joy knew no bounds when a tone was immediately broadcast over the sheriff's radio system, and with a wondrous click

the relay cut in and the whistle blasted mightily, to the delight of the firemen, if not of the neighbors.

The department declared itself "in service" and waited for the first alarm. It will be difficult for my readers to believe what happened next, but with God as my witness, of nearly two thousand homes in Perry Township, the first alarm to be broadcast, some two weeks later, was:

> "FOR PERRY TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT - A HOUSE ON FIRE - THE LOU FAHRLENDER RESIDENCE ON ALTA VISTA DRIVE"

Freddie Smith, our loyal service station operator, who had since been appointed Assistant Chief, raced the truck to Lou's house, arriving even before the whistle had stopped blowing (a two-minute blast). It was quickly discovered that the water heater relief valve had 'popped', filling the house with steam, and that there wasn't an actual fire. Mrs. Fahrlender, who was home alone at the time, asked me how in the world we could possibly have gotten there so fast. With a great deal of gratitude I proudly explained that it was only because her husband had unselfishly labored those many long hours to construct and donate the radio receiver that had automatically blown the fire whistle.

3

The Second Alarm - Another "Believe it or Not"

Several weeks passed without another alarm, although one volunteer had sped to Freddie's station in the middle of the night when awakened by what he thought was the strident blast of the fire whistle.

Perry Township almost borders the Ohio River, where steam boats, many of which have steam whistles, plied the waters with great frequency. On this particular night the wind was blowing from the river, and our faithful volunteer, whose name will be omitted, couldn't understand why no other firemen reported to man the truck. As he stood in front of Freddie's gas station wondering what to do next, the steam boat blew its whistle again, and a very red-faced and sheepish fireman drove home and crawled back into bed.

But one evening soon after, an alarm came in that was to turn the tide of public opinion from one of antipathy toward those "bungling fool firemen" to one of admiration and wholehearted support. The alarm was for a house in West Franklin, Indiana, a small settlement of not more than a dozen homes located midway along the bluffs lining the Ohio River between Evansville and Mount Vernon, Indiana. This meant a twelve mile run over narrow, twisting, hilly, gravel roads. But with Freddie Smith at the wheel, myself in the cab, three men on the back step, and a long line of cars following, we made it to West Franklin in about twenty minutes.

The entire village was bathed in the orange glow from the flames leaping from a large, two-story frame house.

Oops! Wrong whistle.

Neighbors had carried out the deep freeze, but were driven back by smoke and flames from any further effort. It truly looked as if the whole village might go.

Although this was the first real fire any of the volunteers (other than myself) had ever fought, truthfully no professional fire department could have done better. These men "kept their cool" and remembered exactly what had been taught them during our frequent drills: "if there is any confinement of heat under a ceiling or roof, lay the fog into it with a sweeping motion so that it will vaporize into steam." A tin roof was holding in a great deal of superheated air, smoke, and gasses, and from atop the front porch these men directed the only weapons we had - two high pressure fog lines, set on wide angle fog pattern.

What happened within the next several minutes amazed every person in the village, but none any more than the firemen themselves, when vast clouds of steam enveloped the old house, then cleared away, and revealed no more smoke or fire. Extinguishment, including overhaul, had not emptied our 435 gallon booster tank!

Within a day or two news of this "miracle" had spread to thousands of persons in the area we were protecting, and letters to the editor of Evansville and Mount Vernon newspapers were published lauding the new volunteers. A feature writer with the Evansville Press devoted an entire column to the event. With the public now backing us. We were launched on our way to what was to become the largest and busiest volunteer fire department in southern Indiana!

FD
"Did we do that?"

4

To Laugh or to Cry?

With winter coming on, the need for a fire station was becoming acute, since the fire truck could freeze up parked in front of Freddie's gas station during the day. Freddie talked his gasoline distributor into leasing us ground next to the gas station for a dollar a year. Within two months a concrete block two-bay fire station conservatively valued at five thousand dollars had been completed, and the volunteers were only nine hundred dollars further in debt. It seems that some of Freddie's customers were bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, and construction workers. These men, along with the firemen, did all the work with donated materials.

Within a year another second hand fire truck was obtained -a 500 GPM pumper to back up the high pressure fog truck. When flames broke through the roof of a variety store one January evening, the high pressure fog rig (which at this writing is still in service as a reserve piece) attacked the blaze from the front of the store, and Number 2 caught a plug and laid out to the side of the store.

Assistant Chief Jack Brown (who had replaced Freddie, who lost his lease - partly because he closed his station so often to attend fires) crawled in the side door on his belly with a 1-1/2" line and doused the seat of the blaze in the air conditioner cooling tower in the attic. Jack yelled for salvage covers, which were spread over thousands of dollars worth of stock. What could have been a $25,000.00 fire was held to less than $1,000.00 damage.

"Put out a fire in "my" store will you."

A job well done - everyone thought - everyone, that is except the owner of the store. When he saw the flames leaping from his store roof he assumed he would have a total loss, collect the insurance, get out from under a business he had been trying to sell, and that his troubles would be over. But as he watched the flames diminish, leaving only a nasty mess to clean up, his anger at the firemen for extinguishing the fire so efficiently took on such proportions that he lost many of his remaining customers. To make matters even worse he berated the well-meaning lady who first saw the flames and phoned in the alarm.

But let us contrast this irate store owner with an elderly widow, whose small home caught fire a few days later. The run was to an adjoining township (now protected by their own efficient fire department). After a thirteen mile run and another good stop, the firemen left with the widow's thanks. Several days later the department received a letter from the kind old lady, which read:

"Dear Perry Township Volunteer Firemen,

You boys saved everything I own. I am sorry that this is all I have to send. May God bless you everyone is my prayer."

In the envelope was a worn ten dollar bill.

5

"Cecil"

Taking over the service station next to the new fire station was Cecil Renfrow, a good-hearted soul, whose quickly-acquired devotion to the Department seemed limitless. When an alarm would hit, Cecil would dash next door to the fire station, open the overhead doors, write the type fire and location on the blackboard, start the trucks, and pull them out onto the ramp. This saved us many precious seconds, and as my firemen readers know, these first seconds are worth more than minutes, or even hours later on. We nearly always had both trucks on the way before the two-minute fire whistle blast had ended.

In an adjoining township there is a road named BOLIVAR ROAD, but pronounced by the local residents "BO-LEVER". When the whistle hit one afternoon, and the dispatcher announced: "FOR PERRY TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT A HOUSE FIRE ON BO-LEVER ROAD", Cecil was mystified as were the volunteer firemen who sped to the fire station to find that Cecil had written on the blackboard: "HOUSE - BOLL WEEVIL ROAD".

We had fought two fires at the same time on several occasions, but one dry, windy Sunday afternoon the thing we had feared took place - three fires at the same time. To a volunteer fire department with two fire trucks, and as yet no mutual aid available, this presented a challenge. One alarm was a house, one woods, and one grass. One truck went to the house, one to the woods, and an automobile flashing a blue beacon, loaded with volunteer firemen, brooms, and back packs to the grass fire.

"Not enough air for both.

Fortunately all three fires were extinguished with little difficulty, but before we ever got back to the fire station we had been dispatched to four more fires by radio - for a total of seven alarms. Meanwhile, back at the gas station, however, Cecil was having more trouble than the firemen.

Cecil had an automobile up on the grease rack for repairs, and with the first alarm there was no trouble, nor with the second. But when the third alarm hit, and the whistle blew its third two-minute blast within about ten minutes, the pressure in the tank on the air compressor got so low that the lift with the automobile slowly sank to the ground, there not being enough air pressure to hold it up.

Cecil patiently waited until the pressure had built back up, then he raised the lift, and commenced his repair work when the fourth alarm came in. The lift sank slowly to the floor again, to the accompaniment of the loud blast of the fire whistle. After the air pressure built back up the lift was raised, the repairs attempted, another alarm, and the lift descended.

After stopping his repair work five times, Cecil simply gave up and told his customer to come back another day. Was Cecil mad? He just grinned. This world needs more Cecils.

It was my custom to take the family out for Sunday dinner after Sunday School and Church each week, so that by the time I drove past Cecil's on the way home it was often after 2 P.M., and I had been gone from the township for about five hours. Of course I always stopped in and asked Cecil if there had been any alarms during my absence. The answer was usually "no", but one Sunday afternoon it was different.

"No, no alarms at all except that twenty-five thousand dollar fire this morning." "CECIL!" I screamed, "Are you kidding?" "No, didn't you hear about the big fire down at the boat yard?"

I hadn't, but lost no time in phoning the Assistant Chief. There had indeed been a fire that morning, with loss estimated at $25,000.00. A yacht anchored at a marina on the Ohio River had exploded, setting several other boats afire, and threatening the entire marina filled with craft. The fire was such a distance from the road that there was not enough hose to reach. But a recent acquisition of a portable pump costing about three hundred dollars saved at least three hundred thousand dollars worth of boats. The pump was carried to the end of the longest pier, the suction hose thrown overboard, and two 1-1/2 inch hose lines spewed Ohio River water onto the burning vessels to stop the most threatening fire we had yet encountered.

6

The Perry Twp. Fire Dept. Vs the L & N RR.

One of our country's financial giants is the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. An L & N switching yard, offices, and a large freight warehouse are located just over the city limits in Pigeon Township, a "no-man's land" as far as fire protection is concerned. One afternoon we got a call for a large trash fire near the frame office building, and we gladly responded. There were no hydrants in the area, and as the fire was clearly beyond the extinguishing capacity of water on the fire trucks, we radioed for a water truck from a commercial water hauler. He arrived promptly, and this additional load of water did the trick.

The water hauler sent the Department a bill for $6.00, which was quite justified, and the Department, in turn, billed the L & N Railroad for the $6.00. After several months had elapsed without payment of the bill I telephoned the District Superintendent of the railroad and was told in no uncertain terms that the L & N had no intention of paying for any water, and the Perry Township Volunteer Fire Department could go to blazes elsewhere. When I reported this at the next meeting, many of the volunteers were quite perturbed, and avered they'd never answer another alarm at the L & N.

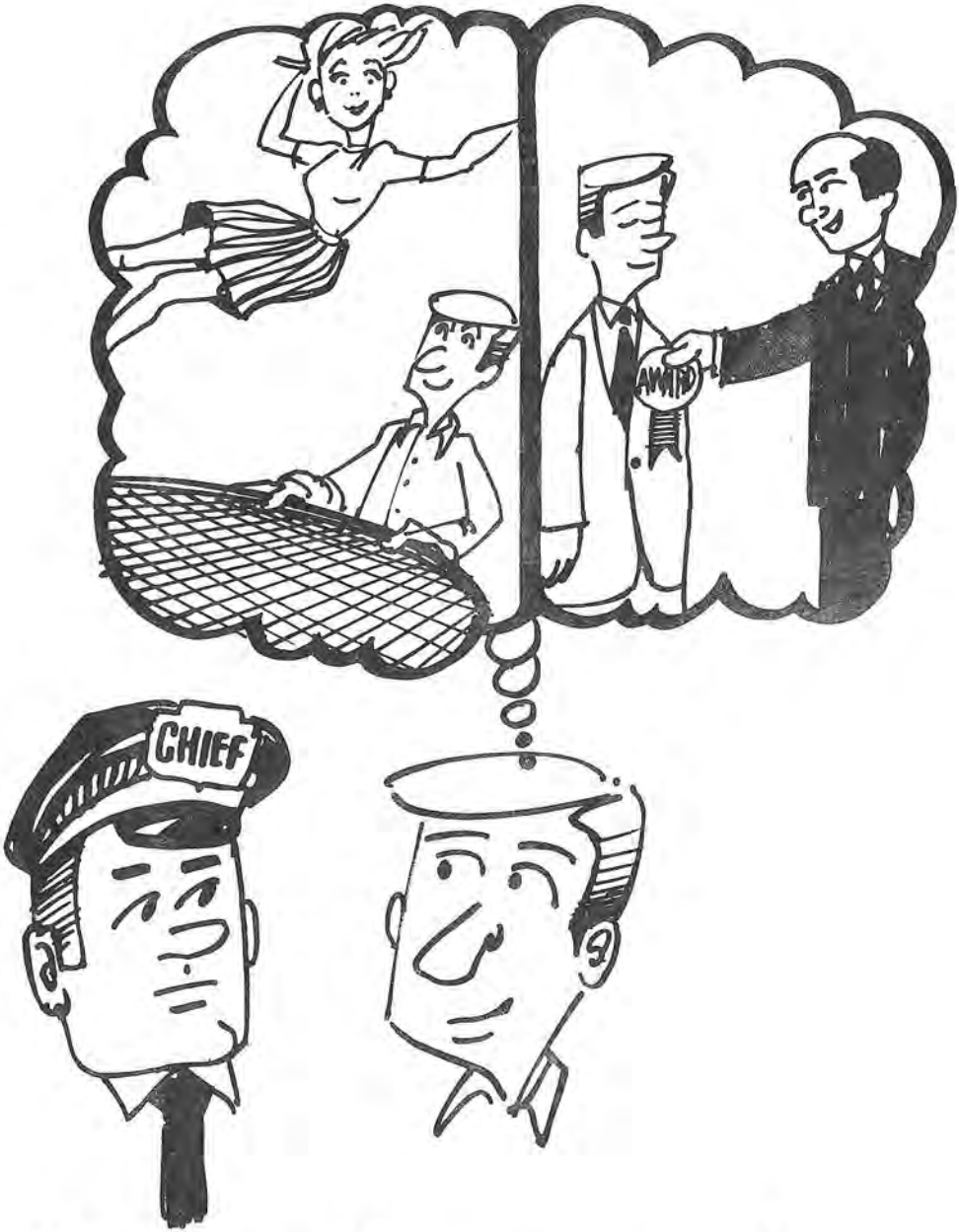
It was not quite one month later that flames licked through the roof of the freight warehouse one evening, after the last employee to leave had failed to unplug the hot plate that kept the coffee hot. No true fireman worth his badge would really refuse to answer an alarm because of a grudge,

and it is a tribute to the men of Perry Township Volunteer Fire Department that not one member refused to answer the call - not even the ones who had moaned the loudest about the unpaid six-dollar water bill.

As we arrived the asphalt roof began to melt and to drip hot tar along the side of the warehouse. This was a hot one, and clearly called for more water than we had on the trucks. As we once again radioed for the commercial water hauler, Pumper No. 7 of the Evansville Fire Department rolled in and attacked the fire from the opposite side of the building. Without both departments and the water hauler the L & N would have had one less warehouse; but the combined efforts prevailed, and the warehouse was saved.

Several more months elapsed with still no check from the L & N for the water used at either fire. Another call to the District Superintendent produced no results, and the Department decided that the twelve dollars involved wasn't worth the trouble of pursuing any further. One Fire Department Board member didn't agree, however, and felt that the principle of the thing was at stake. As he had a business trip to Louisville he dropped into the headquarters of the railroad and demanded to see the President of the company.

He was ushered into the office of a Vice President, and stated his case. Several days later I received a telephone call from the District Superintendent, whose manner and tone of voice were difficult to recognize as belonging to the same man I had talked to previously. But it was indeed the same man, who apologized profusely for the "misunderstanding" and promised a check for the water. The check arrived in the mail the next day, and from that time forward the Department was reimbursed for answering all alarms on railroad property.



No net - No member!

7

A New Recruit, An Old Recruit, A Surprise Booster

Always on the lookout for new recruits, I spied a new family moving into a home several doors from the fire station. I walked by and invited the new resident over to see the fire equipment and to talk about becoming a member.

As we walked into the fire station he asked to see the life net. I quickly explained that only big city departments carried life nets and that we had ladders to reach the tallest buildings in Perry Township - farmhouses. "Oh," he said dejectedly. "If you don't have a life net I'm not interested," and with that he walked back to his new home, never to darken the door of the fire station again.

Every volunteer fire department has at least one recruit who "knows it all" and who stands back at drills because he needs no further instruction. "Why go over the same old things like priming the pump from draft? We already did that once etc. etc."

This particular volunteer seldom drove a fire truck, as he lived some distance from the station, and both trucks were usually en route by the time he arrived. But on one occasion he skidded to a stop on the station ramp when he saw both trucks sitting there waiting for a driver. He drove No. 2 truck to the fire, and upon arrival at the blaze was still by himself. He then picked up the microphone and radioed this unforgettable message to the dispatcher: "Hey, I'm at the fire, but how do you get this here truck in pump gear?"

Two groups who desperately need financial assistance are new volunteer fire departments (without tax support) and families who have suffered a bad fire. Several months after the West Franklin fire we got a call from a frame residence on the West Franklin Road. The fire was going good, with the upstairs fully involved, but not yet vented through the roof. Once again high pressure fog, with resultant steam, blacked it out, but not before the second story was gutted, with all of the family's clothing being destroyed.

As we went about the task of overhauling we noticed a man passing a hat among the large crowd of spectators. Of course we assumed he was taking up a collection for the family. Imagine our surprise when he walked over and presented a hat full of bills and coins to the fire department! He said he had heard that we badly needed additional equipment. This fire department "booster" was later identified as the pastor of a nearby church, and his additional plea in the church bulletin the following Sunday resulted in many contributions being mailed in.

8

The Illustrated Sermon

Near a prominent intersection in Perry Township a ravine had been filled in by an enterprising religious group who proposed to pitch a gospel tent on the site. The "fill" had evidently included a considerable number of logs and tree limbs, which made air pockets under the surface. How these subterranean logs and branches became ignited is still unknown, but the volunteers answering the alarm were greeted with huge billows of smoke rolling up through cracks and fissures in the ground surrounding the tent.

The evangelist arrived shortly, and desperately pleaded, "Can you get it out? Our first meeting is tonight!" With this, one of the volunteers offered, "If we can't Reverend, you can always preach an illustrated sermon!"

But as thousands of gallons of water were pumped into the ground, the smoke gradually turned to steam and then subsided. The revival started on schedule that night on the smokeless but soggy field.

"You can always preach an ill-ustrated sermon."

9

Converts

The battle to organize the new volunteer fire department included some harsh words, and even some doors slammed in the faces of volunteer firemen asking for needed funds. The purpose of this chapter is not to say "I told you so" but rather to point out that "the chickens sometimes do come home to roost." Some who opposed the new department found out - the hard way - that a fire department can be a pretty good thing to have after all.

One well-known township resident, a man of means, lived in a large home on an estate which included a guest house, a swimming pool, a lake, and many acres of woods. When a volunteer knocked at his door one evening during the fund drive, this gentleman, after learning the purpose of the intrusion upon his privacy, simply stated that he had no time to listen to such foolishness and that he had plenty of fire insurance. Although not slamming the door, he turned and walked back into the house.

Two years later his wife and daughter were trapped inside that house when a high wind fanned a trash fire in his woods out of control, blowing such thick smoke and burning brands between the house and the car in the driveway that escape was impossible. We stopped the fire just as it reached the house. Later that year we received a nice check.

Another wealthy resident asserted that he had enough influence to summon the Evansville Fire Department to his suburban home, some two miles west of the city line, so

who needs volunteers? He did! A trash fire spread to his tractor shed, containing the tractor, mowers, implements, fertilizer etc.

His frantic call to the Evansville Fire Department brought only the word that all Evansville equipment was busy with grass fires in the city - why not call the township volunteer department? With flames now licking up the side of his shed, our friend needed no further urging, and dialed the number of the volunteers. As he gave the address and hung up the receiver his heart sank. He could hear the fire whistle blowing and assumed it was for another fire. Now he could get neither the Evansville nor the Perry Township Fire Departments.

Little did he realize that the whistle was blowing for him - that the dispatcher had simply pressed a button and the whistle blew. As he heard the fire truck sirens getting closer our friend began to understand that they were coming to his aid after all, but what was the use - by this time the shed was burning fiercely. Within seconds after pulling to a stop "Old Number One" had two high pressure fog lines forcing steam out of the shed, and as the front doors were flung open, firemen with a rope tied to a pike pole pulled the paint-blistered but otherwise intact tractor to safety. Another convert and another check.

One of our line officers was a junior executive with a large manufacturing concern in Evansville, and he insisted that his office be called whenever there was a house fire. He would usually "take off" to the dismay of his superiors, and would make up the work that evening. One afternoon the boss came shouting into the office, "My wife just called- our woods are on fire. It's spreading toward the house! What'll I do?"

The firm's Vice President lived in an adjoining township which did not as yet have a fire department (they have an excellent department now) so our volunteer phoned in the alarm and drove his boss to the fire. They arrived at the same time as the truck, and the fire was quickly extinguished. Another convert, another big check and our volunteer never again worried about leaving work to help save a home.

10

Embarrassing Moments

One of our Department rules was (and still is) that all firemen will report back to the fire station after each fire to help get the equipment back in service. No fireman shall be excused without the permission of the officer in charge.

One of the first fires we fought was in a sub-standard dwelling on a cold January night when the water froze as fast as it hit. As yet the volunteers had no turnout clothing; there was simply no money to buy any, and it wasn't long before the men got wet and chilled to the bone. One after another of the volunteers came to me and begged, "Chief, I'm about frozen. It's almost out. Can I leave?" I had not the heart to say "no".

Twenty-three men had responded to that alarm. When the last spark was out and it was time to load hundreds of feet of frozen hose I looked around and found myself with two other men. The three of us somehow got that stiff hose onto the truck and then thawed ourselves out back at the fire station. Oscar Egloff (now gone on to his reward) and Rupert Wolf stuck with me to the end.

A cabin in the woods was burning fiercely when the first truck rolled in, and the officer gave the order to catch a plug and drive through the woods, laying hose off the truck, which was weaving its way between the trees. The lay was completed, but there were two difficulties: the hydrant man had a male coupling, and the nozzle man had a female coupling.

Only three were left!

An embarrased officer made a motion at the next meeting that the Department purchase double male and female connections. The motion carried.

In the early days of the Department our relationship with the Evansville Fire Department was sometimes strained. (Today there is an excellent mutual aid setup with the Evansville Fire Department and five suburban volunteer fire departments.) The western city boundary was an imaginary line running 150 feet west of the middle of Tekoppel Avenue. It so happened that a garage behind a residence on Tekoppel Avenue sat astride the line. The front of the garage was in Evansville, and the rear of the structure in Perry Township.

When the fire was discovered, both ends of the garage were blazing. It was a dead heat, with "Old Number One" pulling up the alley at the back of the garage as Evansville Pumper No. 7 caught a plug and laid a supply line down Tekoppel Ave. The volunteers attacked the rear of the garage with high pressure fog out of the tank, while the Evansville pumper waited for water from the plug. By the time water flowed from the Evansville hose, however, both ends of the garage were already out, the volunteers having continued extinguishment beyond the imaginary line. A disgruntled No. 7 crew drove away without a word. *

* Lest I be misunderstood, the volunteers are justly proud of the Evansville Fire Department, one of the finest in the midwest.

"There Were Two Difficulties"

11

The "Grass Fire" with Six Inches of Snow

It's the truth. It really happened. With six inches of snow on the ground the dispatcher announced, "FOR PERRY TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT - A GRASS FIRE ON LOWER MT. VERNON ROAD NEAR WEST FRANKLIN ROAD". As the trucks roared out of the station onto the snow-packed highway, one of the volunteers, who had faith in the dispatcher, jumped onto the grass fire rig which had sat idle in the station all winter, and "took out" after the other trucks. After all, even though there were six inches of snow on the ground the dispatcher did say "grass fire".

Would you believe a hillside covered with six inches of snow with flames licking and dancing up through the snow? We had to believe it because we were looking at it!

A storage tank for an oil well atop the hill had sprung a leak, and the hillside under the snow was saturated with crude oil. Somehow it ignited, and the flames coming up out of that snow made a spectacle that stopped traffic in all directions. The grass rig, a four wheel drive jeep, drove up the hill, and we put out the fire by shoveling on more snow!

12

Conclusion — Join the Fuss

With "Old Number One" now retired to reserve status, the volunteers have a brand new combination high pressure fog - volume pumper in a brand new three-bay fire station No. 2. The growth of the Perry Township Volunteer Fire Department was not as much because of me or the men who shared with me the struggle, as the township residents who got behind us and backed us. These residents shared our sorrows and our joys. They laughed and cried with us because we "blew our own horn". We told them what was happening - through newspapers, radio, television, and a newsletter mailed to each resident. If you don't blow your own horn, nobody will blow it for you.

News media - newspapers, radio, and television - are hungry for good fire stories with "human interest". Not just dull statistics but something that makes you sad or happy; something that makes you laugh or cry. You've just read some human interest fire stories, every one of them true.

Every volunteer fire department has fires occuring with human interest angles which are there if you'll just look for them. Give your interesting fire stories to the news media, that they might share them with the people you protect. These people will back you in your efforts, and will develop a pride in the volunteer fire department that is protecting them. Communicate with those you protect. Blow your own horn. Toot it often with the human interest side of your work. Midst the smoke: to laugh or cry?